

News Release

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Federal agencies begin environmental update for Legacy Parkway

First scoping meeting set for April 17

As a result of a September 2002 federal appeals court decision, the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the 14-mile-long Legacy Parkway in Davis County.

"As part of our review, we'll hold a series of public meetings this spring to gather ideas and concerns to help us address the issues raised by the court," said Colonel Michael Conrad, district engineer for the Corps' Sacramento District.

The Corps and FHWA are holding their first information open house April 17. The meeting will run from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Woods Cross High School, 600 West 2200 South, Woods Cross. People can stop by and talk with the experts anytime between 4 and 8 p.m.

The Utah Department of Transportation was building the highway when the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ordered construction stopped in November 2001 while it reviewed the adequacy of the project's final environmental impact statement (FEIS). In September 2002, the court ruled that the FEIS inadequately addressed some issues.

The FHWA and Corps were the federal agencies responsible for overseeing the drafting and publishing of the environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. FHWA published the project's FEIS in June 2000.

Under the Clean Water Act, the Corps is responsible for regulating work in streams, rivers, wetlands, and other waterways. In January 2001, after nearly four years of review the Corps issued a permit to the Utah Department of Transportation to construct the highway, which affects about 114 acres of wetlands.

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"FHWA's responsibility on the SEIS is to ensure that all alternatives are evaluated and decisions made in the best overall public interest," said Dave Gibbs, FHWA's Utah Division Administrator.

"We plan to spend the next year preparing a supplemental EIS to address the issues raised by the court," said Colonel Michael Conrad, district engineer for Corps' Sacramento District.

In its September 2002 ruling, the court directed the Corps to re-evaluate its permit in a number of areas. These include the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad alignment as an alternative; alternative sequencing for the "Shared Solution," which is an overall approach to transportation in the Davis County area; integration of Legacy Parkway with transit; consideration of the impacts to wildlife; whether a narrower median was a practicable alternative; and whether a right-of-way without a future utility corridor or berm was a practicable alternative.

To address the court's concerns and to ensure a "fresh look" at all the issues, FHWA, in cooperation with the Corps, has selected the firm of Jones and Stokes to conduct an environmental re-evaluation and develop environmental information for the SEIS.

"In addition to the areas the court directed us to review, we'll determine if other areas need to be updated and revised as part of the SEIS process," said the Corps' Conrad. "We want to make sure that all issues are addressed with the best science and engineering available."

For more information on upcoming public meetings, or the SEIS, call 801-951-1039.

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